

EcollegeE

Outdoor Environmental Education for High School & College Students

Introduction

A hybrid of Middle College programs, Experiential & Expeditionary Learning, Semesters-at-Sea, and Outdoor Education for younger grades, EcollegeE (or simply Outdoor Ed. 4 HS) aspires to recruit a committed cadre of high school students and college mentors to participate in Green STEM/project-based Environmental Education in our local Open Spaces and State & County Parks. With an emphasis on Service Learning and Science Standards, EcollegeE seeks to train and sustain groups of self-selected naturalists to pursue careers in science, service, and environmental stewardship.

San Mateo County Office of Education

SMCOE is uniquely positioned to deliver the next great curricular program for high schools in the county. Already SMCOE sponsors an outstanding Outdoor Education program for 5th & 6th graders, and it can close the loop on Green STEM instruction by implementing a high school complement to reinforce valuable skills for a new generation of scientists & explorers.

Just as high school students serve as cabin leaders for the 5th & 6th graders in Outdoor Ed. at Camp Jones Gulch, college students will be recruited to serve as mentor for the high school students. Partnership with CSM, local CSU & UCs, as well as private colleges & Universities will be an important part of the program.

La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District

LHPUSD is uniquely positioned to host the EcollegeE program. Camp Jones Gulch, site of SMCOE's Outdoor Ed. is within the district's boundaries, as are several key sites. Hidden Valley Ranch, Gazos Creek Field Research Station, the Sheriff's Honor Camp, OVY Camp, Camp Loma Mar, Pescadero Marsh, Butano State Park, Memorial & Pescadero Creek County Parks, various organic farms, and several Open Space properties are within LHPUSD, and other Open Spaces, State & County Parks, as well as various colleges, universities, and potential partnering organizations are nearby.

Format

Various formats depend on the support and motivation of sponsors, hosts, partners, and funders. Applying the current model of Outdoor Ed. for 5th & 6th graders, one group per week, would serve the most students. A semester-long (at sea/in nature) program would provide greater depth for those who participate, supplementing a regular high school or college experience. A Charter School or Alternative Education model would be the most comprehensive, but might limit participants. Depending on buses & facilities, the program could serve several hundred to several thousand students per year.

Mobility

Bus transportation is a key component of EcollegeE, but who needs a school when you've got a smart phone? What you do need is curiosity, motivation, a little guidance, a plan, and some transportation. Young people with the right clothes, good pairs of hiking shoes, and fully equipped backpacks are prepared to be EcollegeE students, and the "schooling bus" will transport them to many prospective outdoor sites.

A "schooling bus" will be equipped with wifi & an A/V system for instruction during transit. Specifically, ceiling-mounted video screens, an audio system, and/or individual screens with ear phones at each seat will supplement an electronic educational delivery system on board the bus. Depending on the trip, students will either have a lesson in transit, take on-going courses, or work on projects with mobile devices.

An online school site will provide the curricula, assessments, and data tracking to allow students to work from any location, store their information, monitor their performance, and adapt instructional delivery to maximize their progress.

Choices

While the EcollegeE program will be promoted in participating districts, students will be recruited based on meeting a profile for unidentified giftedness and other unique qualities. We will recruit based on data analyses that reveal students with strong Math scores but low Reading or Language scores, or academically promising students who have one or more of several At-Risk factors (low SES; family, school, or legal problems).

Students will complete an online application, write an essay, and agree to the Terms & Conditions for participation, including purchasing a uniform. Final selection may involve an interview, a fitness test, and preliminary participation in a Service Learning project.

Principles

We value choice, civility, curiosity, respect, responsibility, & a strong work ethic. We insist on good manners and polite behavior at all times. We will engage in a variety of character building activities to enhance our students' moral fiber & affective sensibilities.

Pedagogy

EcollegeE emphasizes constructivism, the inquiry method, project-based learning, and the ideas of Kurt Hahn, among others. We seek to understand the preferred learning modalities of our students, and each will have a customised IEP. We will use adaptive internet tools in aspiring to exceed grade level standards. Using the methods of the peripatetic philosophers of ancient Greece, we seek to make hiking and other outdoor activities into opportunities for contemplation, reflection, and learning. Fun + Relevance = Learning! Adventure, exploration, & excitement, as well as game-based learning, will flavor guided independent study and many field trips, with a panoply of technology.

Service Learning

“Will work for knowledge” is a motto of EcollegeE. Many of the projects that we undertake outdoors are natural examples of Service Learning. Environmental & climate monitoring, species identification bio-blitzes, removal of non-natives, habitat restoration, trail building and maintenance, and facilities repair are just a few of the prospective Service-Learning projects. Additionally, students may work as interns or apprentices with organizations to gain important skills, learn new lessons, and provide service.

Data

At the outset, all students will be given a series of pretests & surveys designed to assess their level of academic performance in a variety of subjects, their preferred learning modalities, personality traits, and career aspirations. We will attempt to target our instruction to address weaknesses and enhance strengths based on a student's academic profile. Through our student data portal, we will monitor and track student work on a wide variety of instructional websites.

Terms & Conditions

All students commit to a program of discipline and self-discipline. All students make a commitment to being drug and alcohol free. All students must adhere to a code of conduct, a behavior contract, and an honor code. All students will have an IEP (PEP) and regular academic counseling. If there is a waiting list, we will initiate a “Karate Kid initiation” in which students must work for the privilege of being a part of the program. They must do both physical labor and an academic project. Upon returning to their school (or graduating), students agree to participate in clubs, journalism, yearbook, class events, etc. Students will have a plan for attending college, and preferably take at least one college class before high school graduation. All students agree to prepare for and take a variety of tests, including PSAT, the SAT, and at least one AP exam. After completing the program, we will continue to track & monitor our students to gauge the effectiveness of EcollegeE.

Open Space Academy

For more specific information on the genesis & particulars of the EcolleGE program idea, please visit: openspaceacademy.weebly.com.

Some Sources

- San Mateo County Office of Education: <http://www.smcoe.org/>
- SMCOE Outdoor Ed.: <http://www.smcoe.org/learning-and-leadership/outdoor-education/>
- La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District : <http://www.lhpUSD.com/pages/lhpUSD>
- The Open Space Academy: openspaceacademy.weebly.com
- Peninsula Open Space Trust: <https://openspacetrust.org/>
- Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District: <http://www.openspace.org/>
- San Mateo County Parks: <http://parks.smcgov.org/>
- California State Parks: <https://www.parks.ca.gov/>
- SMC Resource Conservation District: <http://www.sanmateorcd.org/>
- Pescadero Conservation Alliance:
- Association for Experiential Education: <http://www.aee.org/>
- Association for Outdoor & Environmental Education: <https://aeoe.org/>
- National Outdoor Leadership School: <http://www.nols.edu/>
- Expeditionary Learning: <http://eleducation.org/>
- Youth Service America: <http://ysa.org>
- Coastal Alliance for Species Enhancement:
- College of San Mateo: <http://smccd.edu/>
- UC Santa Cruz, <http://www.ucsc.edu/>
- Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems: <http://casfs.ucsc.edu/>
- Lick Observatory: <https://www.icolick.org/>
- CSU San Francisco, <http://www.sfsu.edu/>
- Stanford University, <http://www.stanford.edu/>
- Stanford Outdoor Ed.: <http://outdoored.stanford.edu/>
- Pie Ranch: <http://www.pieranch.org/>
- Harley Farms: <http://harleyfarms.com/>
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- Big Creek Lumber: <http://www.big-creek.com/>
- ISKME: <http://www.iskme.org/>
- Vida Verde: <http://www.weducation.org/>
- California Academy of Sciences: <http://www.calacademy.org/>
- UC Berkeley, <http://www.berkeley.edu/>
- Lawrence Hall of Science: <http://www.lawrencehallofscience.org/>
- Exploratorium: <https://www.exploratorium.edu/>
- The Sierra Club: <http://www.sierraclub.org/>
- National & Community Service: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/>
- North American Association for Environmental Education: <https://naaee.org/>
- Project Wild: <http://projectwild.org/>
- Project Adventure: <http://www.pa.org/>
- Davidson Institute: <http://www.davidsongifted.org/>
- Alternative School in the California Education Code: http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC§ionNum=58500

Randall Vail
randyvail@gmail.com
650-722-1070